



JBSA News

San Antonio Sailors helping change the world through STEM

By Burrell Parmer | Navy Recruiting District San Antonio Public Affairs | October 05, 2017

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EDINBURG, Texas --

"Changing the world through STEM" was the theme of the 2017 Hispanic Engineering, Science, and Technology, or HESTEC, Week held on the campus of the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Oct. 2-7.

HESTEC Week is an educational conference that features events geared toward promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM, education to people of all ages and backgrounds.

This initiative began with a STEM Literacy Panel discussion comprised of distinguished speakers focused on increases in STEM-related degrees and employment during Educators Day.

Navy Capt. Thomas Herzig, commanding officer, Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio, participated in the panel along with executives from University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, Shell and others.

A native of Houston, Herzig shared how the Navy prepared him for success and how his educational experiences prepared him for his journey as a Navy officer.

"I see STEM as the equivalent of an opportunity," Herzig said. "One must keep an open mind and be willing to take on the risks and challenges that may be presented. And you must have a consistent willingness to learn."

Herzig also informed the audience of educators of the Health Professions Scholarship Program, or HPSP, and Navy Health Services Collegiate Program, or HSCP.

The HPSP allows students to join the Navy who plan to attend medical school, dental school or a qualifying health-care-related postgraduate program while the HSCP is designed to help students in the health care professions become officers and leaders in America's Navy.

Retired Texas Congressman Ruben Hinojosa, a co-founder of HESTEC, was thankful for the panelists' participation and for the attendance of the teachers and university facility.

Following lunch, the educators heard from the keynote speaker, Stephen Ritz, executive director of Green Bronx Machine.

After the presentation, the Navy hosted two breakout sessions, where William Garcia, education services specialist, Military Entrance Processing Station San Antonio, joined by Juan Rodriguez, Navy Recruiting District San Antonio, briefed the aspects of the Career Exploration Program.

The Department of Defense sponsors the Career Exploration Program with a two-part

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mission of providing a career exploration service to U.S. youth, and qualified leads to military recruiters.

Corina Fuentes, a physics and anatomy teacher with Valley View High School in Hidalgo, Texas, said that the brief was very informative.

"My administrator advised me to attend HESTEC," Fuentes said. "To be honest, I was a bit reluctant to attend the Navy's breakout session, but I am so glad that I did."

Fuentes recalled taking a similar career exploration test in high school and the results were off the mark and that it recommended that she become a social worker.

"I wish now if there was a better test to take in high school, I would have found my destined career path a lot sooner," said Fuentes, who became an engineer and is now a high school science teacher.

In the afternoon, school administrators attended a superintendents' leadership summit followed by University Partnerships Supporting STEM Education and Workforce Development where Cmdr. Jeffrey Reynolds, NRD commanding officer, served as a panelist.

Through the support of sponsors and partners, to include the U.S. Navy, HESTEC strives to empower teachers and administrators with the resources to inspire their students to pursue STEM careers through Educators Day, Student Leadership Day, Latina Day, Robotics Day, the Middle School Challenge, and the Navy's SeaPerch Challenge Competition.

Additionally, during the Fall Career Expo, university students will be provided with employment and internship opportunities, and the community as a whole will partake in Community Day.

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